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1 CAPITAL PRIZE OF	\$150,000	\$150,000
1 GRAND PRIZE OF	50,000	50,000
1 GRAND PRIZE OF	20,000	20,000
2 LARGE PRIZES OF	10,000	20,000
2 LARGE PRIZES OF	5,000	20,000
20 PRIZES OF	1,000	20,000
50 " "	500	25,000
100 " "	250	25,000
200 " "	100	40,000
500 " "	50	50,000
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## SHE

A History of Adventure

By J. RIDER HAGGARD.

CHAPTER XIX.

"GIVE ME A BLACK GOAT."

The conversation after this was of such a desultory order that I do not quite recollect it. For some reason, perhaps from a desire to keep her identity and character in reserve, Ayesha did not talk freely, as she usually did. Presently, however, she informed Leo that she had arranged a dance that night for her amusement. I was astonished to hear this, as I fancied that the Amahagger were much too gloomy a folk to indulge in any such frivolity; but, as will presently more clearly appear, it turned out that an Amahagger dance had little in common with such fantastic festivities in other countries, savage or civilized. Then, as we were about to withdraw, she suggested that Leo might like to see some of the wonderful caves, and as he gladly assented to this, thither we departed, accompanied by Job and Billal.

To describe our visit would be to repeat a great deal of what I have already said. The tombs we entered were indeed different, for the whole rock was a honeycomb of sepulchres, but the contents were nearly always the same. Afterward we visited the pyramid of bones that had haunted my dreams on the previous night, and from thence went down a long passage to one of the great vaults occupied by the bodies of the poor citizens of the Imperial Kor. These bodies were not nearly so well preserved, and many of them had no linen covering on them, also they were buried from 900 to 1,000 in a single large vault, the corpses in many instances being tightly piled one upon another, like a heap of slain.

When we had finished inspecting the caves we returned and had our meal, for it was now past 4 in the afternoon, and we needed some food and rest, especially Leo. At 6 o'clock we all, including Job, waited on Ayesha, who set to work to terrify our poor servant still further by showing him pictures on the pool of water in the font like vessel. She learned from me that he was one of seventeen children and then told him that all his brothers and sisters, or as many of them as he could, gathered together in his father's cottage. Then she told him to look in the water, and there, reflected from its still surface, was that dead scene of many years gone by, as it was recalled to our poor servant's brain. Some of the faces were clear enough, but some were more blurred and blotched, or with one feature grossly exaggerated; the fact being that, in these instances, Job had been unable to recall the exact appearance of the individuals, or remember them only by a peculiarity of his tribe, and the water could only reflect what he saw with his mind's eye. For it must be remembered that She's power in this matter was strictly limited; she could apparently, except in very rare instances, only photograph upon the water what was actually in the mind of some one present, and then only by his will. But if she was personally acquainted with a locality she could, as in the case of ourselves and the wholeboat, throw its reflection upon the water, and also the reflection of anything extraneous that was passing there at the time. This power, however, did not extend to the minds of others.

After about an hour of this amusement the mutes by signs indicated that Billal was waiting for an audience. Accordingly he was told to "crawl up," which he did as awkwardly as usual, and announced that the dance was ready to begin if she and the white strangers would be pleased to attend. Shortly afterward we all rose, and Ayesha having thrown a dark cloak (the same, by the way, that she had worn when I saw her cursing by the fire over her white wrappings), we started. The dance was to be held in the open air, on the smooth, rocky plateau in front of the cave, and thither we made our way. About fifteen paces from the mouth of the cave we found three chairs placed, and here we sat and waited, for as yet no dancers were to be seen. The night was almost, but not quite, dark; the moon being not risen as yet, which made it wonder how we should be able to see the dancing.

"You will presently understand," said Ayesha, with a little laugh, when Leo asked her, and we certainly did. Scarcely were

the words out of her mouth when from every point we saw dark forms rushing up, bearing with them what we at first took to be enormous flaming torches. Whatever they were they were burning furiously, for the flames stood out a yard or more behind each bearer. On they came, fifty or more of them, looking like devils from hell with their flaming burdens. Leo was the first to discover what these burdens were.

"Great heaven!" he shouted; "they are corpses on fire!"

I stared, and stared again. He was perfectly right; the torches that were to light our entertainment were human mummies from the caves!

On rushed the bearers of the flaming corpses, and meeting at a spot about twenty paces in front of us, built their ghastly bonfires into a huge bonfire. Heaven! how they roared and flared! No far barrel could have burned as those mummies did. Nor was this all. Suddenly I saw one great fellow seize a flaming human arm that had fallen from its parent frame and rush off into the darkness. Presently he stopped and a tall streak of fire shot up into the air, illumining the gloom, and also the lamp from which it sprang. The lamp was the mummy of a woman tied to a stout stake let into the rock, and he had fired her hair. On he went a few paces and touched a second, then a third and a fourth, till at last we were surrounded on three sides by a great ring of bodies flaring furiously, the material with which they were preserved having rendered them so inflammable that the flames would literally spout out of the ears and mouth in tongues of fire a foot or more long.

Nero illuminated his gardens with live Christians soaked in tar, and we were now treated to a similar spectacle, probably for the first time since his day, only, happily, our lamps were not living ones.

"I promised thee a strange sight, my Holly," laughed Ayesha, whose nerves alone did not seem to be affected, "and behold, I have not failed thee. Also, it bath its lesson. Trust not to the future, for who knows what the future may bring? Therefore live for the day, and endeavor not to escape the dust which seems to be man's end. What thinkest thou those long forgotten nobles and ladies would have felt had they known that they should one day flare to light the dance or boil the pot of savages? But see, here come the dancers; a merry crew—are they not? The stage is lighted—now for the play!"

As she spoke, we perceived two lines of figures, one male and the other female, to the number of about 100, each advancing round the human bonfire, arrayed only in the usual leopard and buck skins. They formed up, in perfect silence, in two lines facing each other, between us and the fire, and then the dance—a sort of infernal and fiendish cancan—began. To describe it is quite impossible; but though there was a good deal of tossing of legs and double shuffling, it seemed to our untutored minds to be more of a play than a dance, and, as usual with this dreadful people, whose minds seem to have taken their color from the caves in which they live, and whose jokes and amusements are drawn from the inexhaustible stores of preserved mortality with which they share their homes, the subject appeared to be a most ghastly one. I know that it represented an attempted murder first of all, and then the burial alive of the victim and his struggling from the grave, each act of the abominable drama, which was carried on in perfect silence, being rounded off and finished with a furious and most revolting dance round the supine victim, who writhed upon the ground in the red light of the fire.

Presently, however, this pleasing piece was interrupted. Suddenly there was a slight commotion, and a great powerful woman, whom I had noted as one of the most vigorous of the dancers, came, made mad and drunken with unholiest excitement, bounding and staggering toward us, shrieking out as she came:

"I want a black goat; I must have a black goat; bring me a black goat!" and down she fell upon the rocky floor, foaming and writhing and shrieking for a black goat—about as hideous a spectacle as can well be conceived.

Instantly most of the dancers came up, and got round her, though some still continued their capers in the background.

"She has got a Devil," sung one of them. "Run and get a black goat! There, Devil, keep quiet—keep quiet! You shall have the goat presently. They have gone to fetch it, Devil."

"I want a black goat; I must have a black goat!" shrieked the foaming, rolling creature again.

"All right, Devil, the goat will be here presently; keep quiet, there's a good Devil!" And so on, till the devil, taken from a neighboring kraal, did at last arrive, being dragged, bleating on to the scene by its horns.

"Is it a black one—is it a black one?" shrieked the possessed.

"Yes, yes, Devil, as black as night!" then said, "keep it behind thee; don't let the Devil see it has got a white spot on its rump and another on its belly. In one minute, Devil, there, cut its throat, quick. Where is the saucer?"

"The goat! the goat! the goat! Give me the blood of my black goat! I must have it; don't you see I must have it! Oh! oh! oh! give me the blood of the goat!"

At this moment a terrified babbler announced that the poor goat had been sacrificed, and the next minute a woman ran up with a saucer full of the blood. This the possessed creature, who was then raving and foaming her wildest, seized and drank, and was instantly recovered, and without a trace of hysteria, or fit, or being possessed, or whatever dreadful thing it was she was suffering from. She stretched her arms, smiled faintly, and walked quietly back to the dancers, who presently withdrew in a double line as they had come, leaving the space between us and the bonfire deserted.

I thought the entertainment (sic) was now over, and feeling rather queer, was about to ask Leo if he would rise, when suddenly what at first I took to be a baboon came hopping round the fire, and was instantly met upon the other side by a lion, or rather a human being dressed in a lion's skin. Then came a goat, then a man wrapped in an ox's hide, with the horns wobbling about in a ludicrous way. After him followed a black dog, then an impala, then a koodoo, then more goats, and many other animals, including a fish served up in the shining scaley hide of a boa constrictor, several yards of which trailed along the ground behind her. When all the beasts had collected they began to dance about in a lumbering, unnatural fashion, and to imitate the sounds produced by the respective animals they represented, till the whole air was alive with roars and bleating and the hissing of snakes. This went on for a long time, till, getting tired of the pantomime, I asked Ayesha if there would be any objection to Leo and my walking round to inspect the human torches, and as she had nothing to say against it, we started, striking round to the left. After looking at one or two of the flaming bodies we were about to return, thoroughly disgusted with the weirdness of the spectacle, when our attention was attracted by one of the dancers, a particularly active leopard, that had separated itself from its fellow beasts, and was whisking about in our immediate neighborhood, but gradually drawing far to a spot where the shadow was darkest, equidistant between two of the flaming mummies. Drawn by curiosity, we followed it, when suddenly it darted past us into

the shadows beyond, and as it did so, erected itself and whispered: "Come," in a voice that we both recognized as that of Ustane. Without waiting to consult me, Leo turned and followed her into the outer darkness, and I, feeling sick enough at heart, went after them. The leopard crawled on for about fifty paces—a sufficient distance to be quite beyond the light of the fire and torches—and then Leo came up with it, or rather with Ustane.

"Oh, my lord," I heard her whisper, "so I have found thee. Listen! I am in peril of my life from 'She-who-must-be-obeyed.' Surely the Baboon has told thee how she drove me from thee. I love thee, my lord, and thou art mine according to the custom of the country. I saved thy life. My Lion, wilt thou cast me off now?"

"Of course not," ejaculated Leo. "I have been wondering whether thou hadst gone. Let us go and explain matters to the queen."

"No, my lord; she would slay us. Thou knowest not her power; the Baboon there, he knoweth, for he saw. Nay, there is but one way; if thou wilt cleave to me thou must live with me across the marshes even now, and then perhaps we may escape."

"For heaven's sake, Leo," I began, but she broke in:

"Nay, listen not to him. Swift—be swift; death is in the air we breathe. Even now, mayhap, she heareth us," and without more ado, she proceeded to back her arguments by throwing herself into his arms. As she did so the leopard's head slipped from her hair. I saw the three white finger marks upon it, gleaming faintly in the starlight. Once more realizing the desperate nature of the situation, I was about to interpose, for I knew that Leo was not too strong minded where women were concerned—when—oh, horror—I turned round, and there was She herself, and with her Billal and two male mutes. I gasped and nearly sunk to the ground, for I knew that such a situation must result in some dreadful tragedy, of which it seemed exceedingly probable to me that I should be the first victim. As for Ustane, she untwined her arms and covered her eyes with her hands, while Leo, not knowing the full terror of the position, merely colored up, and looked as silly as a man caught in such a trap would naturally do.

CHAPTER XX.

TRIUMPH.

Then followed a moment of the most painful silence that I ever endured. It was broken by Ayesha, who addressed herself to Leo.

"Nay, now, my lord and guest," she said, in her softest tones, which yet had the ring of steel about them, "look not so bashful. Surely the sight was a pretty one—the leopard and the lion!"

"Oh, hang it all!" said Leo, in English.

"And thou, Ustane," she went on, "surely I should have passed thee by had not the light fallen on the white across thy hair. Well! well! the dance is done—see, the tapers have burned down, and all things end in darkness and in ashes. So thou thoughtest it a fit time for love, Ustane, my servant—and I, dreaming not that I could be disobeyed, thought thee already far away."

"Play not with me," moaned the wretched woman; "day me, and let there be an end."

"Nay, why? It is not well to go swift from the hot lips of love down to the cold mouth of the grave, and she made a motion to the mutes, who instantly stopped up and caught the girl by either arm. With an oath Leo sprang upon the nearest, and buried him to the ground, and then stood over him with his face set and his fist ready.

Again Ayesha laughed. "It was well thrown, my guest; thou hast a strong arm for one who so late was sick. But now out of thy courtesy I pray thee let that man live and do my bidding. He shall not harm the girl; the night air grows chill, and I would welcome her in mine own place. Surely she whom thou dost favor shall be favored of me also."

I took Leo by the arm, and pulled him from the prostrate mute, and he, half bewildered, obeyed the pressure. Then we all set out for the cave across the plateau, where a great pile of white human ashes was all that remained of the fire that had lit the dancing, for the dancers had vanished.

In due course we gained Ayesha's boudoir—all too soon it seemed to me, having a sad prelude of what was to come lying heavy on my heart.

Ayesha seated herself upon her cushions, and having dismissed Job and Billal, by signs bade the mutes tend the lamps and retire, all save one girl, who was her favorite personal attendant. We three remained standing, the unfortunate Ustane a little to the left of the rest of us.

"Now, O Holly," Ayesha began, "how came it that thou didst hear my words bidding this evil deed?" and she pointed to Ustane—"to go from hence—thou at whose prayer I did weakly spare her life—how canst thou, I say, that thou wast a sharer in what I saw to-night? Answer, and for thine own sake, I say, speak the truth, for I am not minded to hear lies upon this matter."

"It was by accident, O queen," I answered. "I knew naught of it."

"I do believe thee, O Holly," she answered, coldly; "and well it is for thee that I do. Then does all the guilt rest upon her?"

"I don't see any particular guilt about it," broke in Leo. "She is not anybody else's wife, and it appears that she has married me according to the custom of this awful place, so who is the worse? Anyway, madam, he went on, 'whatever she has done, I have done, too, so if she is to be punished, let me be punished also; and I tell thee, he went on, working himself up into a fury, 'that if thou biddest one of those dead and dumb villains to touch her again I will tear him to pieces.' And he looked as though he meant it."

Ayesha listened in silence, and made no remark. When he had finished, however, she addressed Ustane.

"Hast thou, aught to say, woman? Thou sily straw, from feather, who dost think to float against the passion's petty eddy, even against the great wind of my will! Tell me, for I fain would understand. Why didst thou thus thing?"

And then I think I saw the most tremendous exhibition of moral courage and intrepidity that it is possible to conceive. For she, poor doomed girl, knowing what she had to expect at the hands of her terrible queen, knowing, too, from bitter experience, how great was her power, yet gathered herself together, and out of the very depths of despair found materials to defy her.

"I did it, O queen," she answered, drawing herself up to the full of her stately height and throwing back the panther skin off her head, "because my love is stronger than the grave. I did it because my life without this man whom my heart chose would be but a living death. Therefore did I risk my life; and now that I know that it is forfeit to thine anger yet am I glad that I did risk it, and pay it away in the risking, ay, because he embraced me once and told me that he yet loved me."

Here Ayesha half rose from her couch and then sunk down again.

"I have no magic," went on Ustane, her rich voice ringing strong and full, "and I am not a queen, nor do I live forever, but a woman's heart is heavy to sink through waters, however deep, O queen. And a woman's eyes are quick to see, even through thy veil, O queen."

"Listen; I know it; thou dost love this man thyself, and therefore wouldst thou destroy

me who stand across thy path. Ay, I die—I die and go into the darkness, nor know I whither I go. But this I know. There is a light shining in my breast, and by that light, as by a lamp, I see the truth and the future that I shall not share unroll itself before me like a scroll. When first I knew my lord," and she pointed to Leo, "I knew also that death would be the bridal gift he gave me; it rushed upon me of a sudden, but I turned not back, being ready to pay the price, and behold, death is here! And now, even as I know that, so do I, standing on the steps of doom, know that thou shalt not reap the profits of thy crime. Mine he is, and though thy beauty shine like a sun among the stars mine shall be remembrance for thee. Never here upon this earth shall he look like in the eyes and call thee wife. Thou, too, art doomed. I see! and he voice rang like the cry of an inspired prophetess; "ah, I see!"

Then came an answering cry of mingled rage and terror. I turned my head. Ayesha had risen, and was standing with her outstretched hand pointing at Ustane, who had suddenly stopped speaking. I gazed at the poor woman, and as I gazed there grew upon her face that same woful, fixed expression of terror that I had seen once before when she had broken out into her wild chant. Her eyes grew large, her nostrils dilated, and her lips blanched.

Ayesha said nothing; she made no sound, she only drew herself up, stretched out her arm, and, her tall veiled frame quivering like an aspen leaf, appeared to look fixedly at her victim. Even as she did so Ustane put her hands to her head, uttered one piercing scream, turned round twice, and then fell backward with a thud prone upon the floor. Both Leo and myself rushed to her—she was stone dead—blasted into death by some mysterious electric agency or overwhelming will force whereof the dread She had commanded.

For a moment Leo did not quite realize what had happened. But when he did his face was awful to see. With a savage oath he rose from beside the corpse, and turning, literally springing at Ayesha, he began watching, and seeing him coming, stretched out her hand again, and he came staggering back toward me, and would have fallen had I not caught him. Afterward he told me that he felt as though he had suddenly received a violent blow in the chest, and, what is more, cowed as though all the manhood had been taken out of him.

Then Ayesha spoke. "Forgive me, my guest," she said, softly, addressing him, "if I have shocked thee with my justice."

"Forgive me, thou fiend," roared poor Leo, wringing his hands in his rage and grief—"forgive thee, thou murderer! By heaven, I will kill thee if I can!"

"Nay, nay," she answered in the same soft voice, "thou dost not understand—the time has come for thee to learn. Thou art my love, my Kallikrates—my Beautiful, my Strong! For 2,000 years, Kallikrates, have I waited for thee, and now at length thou hast come back to me; and as for this woman," pointing to the corpse, "she stood between me and thee, and therefore I have removed her, Kallikrates."

"It is an accursed lie!" screamed Leo. "My name is not Kallikrates! I am Leo Vincy; my ancestor was Kallikrates—at least I believe he was."

"Ah, thou sayest it, thine ancestor was Kallikrates, and thou, even thou, art Kallikrates come back—and mine own dear lord!"

"I am not Kallikrates, and as for being thy lord, or having anything to do with thee, I had rather be the lord of a band from hell, for she would be better than thou."

"Sayest thou so—myself thou so, Kallikrates? Nay, but thou hast not seen me for so many years that no memory remains. Yet am I very fair, Kallikrates!"

"I hate thee, murderer, and do not wish to see thee. What is it to me how fair thou art! I hate thee, I say."

"Yet, within a very little space shalt thou creep to my knee and swear that thou dost love me," answered Ayesha, with a sweet, mocking laugh. "Come, there is no time like the present time; here, before this dead girl who loved thee, let us put it to the proof."

"Look now on me, Kallikrates!" and with a sudden motion she shook her gauzy covering from her and stood forth in her low kirtle and her snaky zone, in her glorious, radiant beauty and her imperial grace, rising from the wave, or Galatea from her marble, or a beautiful spirit from the tomb. She stood forth and fixed her deep and glowing eyes upon his own, and I saw his clinched fists unclasp and his set and quivering features relax beneath her gaze. I saw his wonder and astonishment grow into admiration, and then into fascination; and the more he struggled the more I saw the power of her dread beauty fasten on him and take possession of his senses, dragging them and drawing the heart out of him. Did I not know the process! Had not I, who was twice his age, gone through it myself! Was I not going through it afresh even then, though her sweet and passionate gaze was not for me? Yes, alas, I was. Alas, that I should have to confess that at that very moment I was rent by mad and furious jealousy. I could have flown at his throat, shame upon me! That woman had confounded and almost destroyed my moral sense, as she was bound to confound all who looked upon her superhuman loveliness. But somehow, I do not know how, I got the better of myself, and once more turned to see the climax of the tragedy.

"Oh, heavens!" gasped Leo, "art thou a woman?"

"A woman in truth—in a very truth—and thine own spouse, Kallikrates," she answered, stretching out her rounded ivory arms toward him and smiling, ah, so sweetly!

He looked and looked, and slowly I perceived that he was drawing nearer to her. Suddenly his eye fell upon the corpse of poor Ustane, and he shuddered and stopped.

"How can I?" he said, hoarsely. "Thou art a murderer. She loved me."

Observe, he was already forgetting that he had loved her.

"It is naught," she murmured, and her voice sounded as the night wind passing through the trees. "It is naught at all. If I have sinned, let my beauty answer for my sin. If I have sinned it is for love of thee; let my sin, therefore, be put away and forgotten; and once more she stretched out her arms and whispered, "Come," and then in another few seconds it was over. I saw him struggle—I saw him even turn to fly; but her eyes drew him stronger than iron bonds, and the magic of her beauty and concentrated will and passion entered into him and overpowered him—ay, even there—in the presence of the body of the woman who had loved him well enough to die for him. It sounds horrible and wicked enough, but he cannot be blamed too much, and he sure his sin will find him out. The temptress who drew him into evil was more than human, and her beauty was greater than the loveliness of the daughters of men.

"Perchance thou dost not believe my word, Kallikrates—perchance thou thinkest that I do delude thee, and that I have not lived these many years, and that thou hast not been born again to me. Now will I show thee, and thou also, my Holly, who dost stand staring there as though of a truth thou hadst taken root in this unkindly soil. Bear each one of you a lamp, and follow after me whither I shall lead ye."

Without pausing to think—indeed, speaking for myself, I had since abandoned the

function in circumstances under which to think